



**INDIGENOUS**  
TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

ASSOCIATION TOURISTIQUE  
**AUTOCHTONE**  
DU CANADA

## **International Indigenous Tourism Conference 2018 closes with a renewed focus for the Indigenous tourism industry and celebration of award winners**

**November 1, 2018, Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of Métis (Saskatoon, SK)**— The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) wrapped up its seventh annual International Indigenous Tourism Conference (IITC) on a high note, confirming growing demand, international awareness of the quality of Indigenous experiences across the country and endorsements from over 500 delegates and tourism industry leaders.

The conference kicked off with a day dedicated to Saskatchewan’s Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs and operators. Preliminary research into the size and scope of the province’s Indigenous tourism industry estimates there are 78 Indigenous owned tourism operations and over 60 operations, spread out through the north, central and southern regions of the province. Opportunities exist to move the over 70 per cent of businesses which are visitor ready or available if you know who to call, to market ready and export ready, with the ability to reach growing international markets. When asked what sets Indigenous tourism apart in Saskatchewan from the rest of Canada, research participants cited the land and access to diverse, land-based activities, and the uniqueness of First Nations and Métis culture on the Prairies.

The following two days followed the theme of “The Indigenous Tourism Economy: Learning Together and Sharing Our Stories.” Over 500 delegates took part in panel discussions, breakout sessions, keynote presentations and local cultural experiences. Delegates from across the Canadian tourism industry, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities, as well as representatives from global Indigenous tourism organizations discussed Indigenous tourism topics, barriers, opportunities and trends across Canada and the world.

Inspirational keynote presenters included The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Canada’s Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Film Producer and CEO of the Indigenous Screen Office Jesse Wenthe, Destination Canada’s President and CEO David Goldstein.

ITAC also announced the demand for Indigenous tourism experiences was at an all-time high, and that the non-profit association was already exceeding all economic forecast goals originally laid out for 2021. ITAC’s new targets for 2024 will see total Indigenous tourism revenues contributing \$2.2 billion to the annual Canadian GDP, 49,383 total jobs in Indigenous tourism, and 200 export-ready indigenous tourism experiences across Canada.

Indigenous tourism in Canada contributed \$1.8 billion to the annual GDP last year, according to a joint research initiative from ITAC and The Conference Board of Canada (CBoC). The \$1.8 billion is a \$412 million increase from 2015, where Indigenous tourism contributed a total of \$1.4 billion to the Canadian GDP. Due to the growing demand, Indigenous tourism businesses have expanded to 1,878 in 2017, from 1,579 businesses in 2015. This increase has led to 200 export ready Indigenous tourism experiences in 2017 – up from 80 in 2015.

One of the largest areas of growth is the reported increase in Indigenous tourism jobs. There were 41,153 total jobs in 2017, compared to 33,112 jobs in 2015, a total increase of 8,041 jobs.

Another key announcement was that one in every three international visitors (37 per cent) to Canada say they are interested in Indigenous tourism experiences, according to new research conducted in partnership with Destination Canada.



**INDIGENOUS**  
TOURISM ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

ASSOCIATION TOURISTIQUE  
**AUTOCHTONE**  
DU CANADA

The country with the highest percentage of visitors interested in Indigenous experiences is France, with 63 per cent of visitors wanting to partake in Canadian Indigenous activities. Following France's lead is Germany, with 47 per cent of German visitors to Canada interested in Indigenous experiences.

The USA and China both offer the largest potential market opportunities, in terms of potential visitation with 33 per cent and 35 per cent respectively, interested in Indigenous experiences.

"The participation by the local and national Indigenous tourism industry at this year's conference was fantastic and I was honoured to share so much good news," says President and CEO Keith Henry. "It is more important than ever that we keep up this positive momentum and engagement."

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) along with its core partners Indigenous Tourism of British Columbia (ITBC), Tourism Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, Shuswap Nation Tribal Council, Shackan Indian Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band, were also announced as the successful bidder to host the 8<sup>th</sup> annual International Indigenous Tourism Conference (IITC) in Kelowna, British Columbia in 2019.

The intensive three days culminated with the National Indigenous Tourism Awards and a full list of winners and nominees may be accessed online at [indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/news/](http://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/news/).

#### **About the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada**

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) works to improve the socio-economic condition of Indigenous peoples through the provisions of economic development advisory services, tourism conferences, capacity development training and workshops, industry research and information for Indigenous tourism operators and communities within the 13 regions; 10 provinces and three territories of Canada. ITAC develops relationships with other groups and regions with similar mandates, uniting the Indigenous tourism industry in Canada and works to enable collective support, product development, promotion and marketing of authentic Indigenous cultural tourism businesses in a respectful protocol. ITAC also just released their brand-new experience guide, detailing Indigenous experiences across Canada, in which visitors can learn about the values of the respect, honour and integrity that guides our communities while discovering the traditional territories, history, people and culture that has been a part of our country for centuries. To download the full 2018/19 Guide to Indigenous Tourism in Canada go to:

<https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/indigenous-tourism-experience-guide/>. The ITAC Board is made up of Indigenous tourism industry representatives from each of the provinces and territories. For more information, visit [www.indigenoustourism.ca](http://www.indigenoustourism.ca).

-30-

#### **Media contacts:**

Jenna Hickman, Beattie Tartan: 250-592-3838, 250-215-8425 (cell) or [jenna.hickman@beattiegroupp.com](mailto:jenna.hickman@beattiegroupp.com)

Keith Henry, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada: 604-639-4408 or [keith@indigenoustourism.ca](mailto:keith@indigenoustourism.ca)